

Claims 9, 10, and 11, line 1, please delete "5" and substitute--7--;

Claim 16, line 1, please delete "12" and substitute--13--;

Claim 24, line 1, please delete "1" and substitute--3--;

Claim 26, line 1, please delete "5" and substitute--7--;

Claim 28, line 1, please delete "12" and substitute--13--;

Please amend Claims 3, 4, 6, 7, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 44, 45 and 46 as follows:

B 3. (Twice Amended) A progressive die for shaping a consecutive series of adjacent discs from a strip of relatively stiff material, said strip having a longitudinal center line, said die comprising a series of adjacent die stations which receive said strip and which shape said discs, said die including slot cutting means for forming at least one laterally extending slot between adjacent discs while leaving at least two narrow deformable bridges connecting said adjacent discs, said bridges having a lateral width and thickness sufficient to enable deformation thereof to either increase or decrease the distance between said adjacent discs, said intermediate stations following said slot cutting means and including cutting means for shaping said discs, [Apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein] and said slot cutting means [forms] forming at least some of said bridges with portions which are disposed at an angle relative to said center line to facilitate [an angled shape which facilitates] said deformation.

B² 4. (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 3, wherein said [angled shape is] bridges have the shape of a chevron.

B³ 6. (Twice Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 7 [5], wherein two of said [laterally spaced] narrow deformable bridges are provided on each side of and spaced from said center line.

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word
Sub D5
7. (Twice Amended) Apparatus comprising a strip of relatively stiff material including a series of consecutive discs formed along the length thereof, each of said discs including a center and said centers falling substantially on an imaginary center line of said strip, at least two adjacent discs having at least one laterally extending slot therebetween forming at least two narrow deformable bridges connecting said adjacent discs, said bridges having a lateral width and thickness sufficient to enable deformation thereof to either increase or decrease the distance between said centers of said adjacent discs, [Apparatus according to Claim 5, wherein each] and at least some of said bridges including [includes] portions which are at an angle relative to said center line.

B4
13. (Twice Amended) A process for punching a series of shaped discs from an elongated strip of relatively stiff material formed by pairs of adjacent discs, comprising the steps of simultaneously cutting and shaping said series of shaped discs at a plurality of stations including a slot cutting station and a plurality of intermediate stations, cutting at said slot cutting station at least one slot through said strip between each pair of adjacent discs, said slot forming at least two narrow deformable bridges connecting each pair of adjacent discs, orienting said discs at said intermediate stations while shaping said discs between said bridges at said intermediate stations, and, when necessary, adjusting the distances between pairs of adjacent discs at said intermediate stations by simultaneously deforming said bridges, [A process according to Claim 12, wherein] each of said discs [has] having outer sides, and further comprising the step of engaging said outer sides of each disc while [at] adjacent said [initial] slot cutting station and thereby orienting each disc at said [initial] slot cutting station while cutting said at least one slot.

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14. (Twice Amended) A process for punching a series of shaped discs from an elongated strip of relatively stiff material formed by pairs of adjacent discs, said strip having a longitudinal center line, comprising the steps of simultaneously cutting and shaping said series of shaped discs at a plurality of stations including a slot cutting station and a plurality of intermediate stations, cutting at said slot cutting station at least one slot through said strip between each pair of adjacent discs, said slot forming at least two narrow deformable bridges connecting each pair of adjacent discs, orienting said discs at said intermediate stations while shaping said discs between said bridges at said intermediate stations, and, when necessary, adjusting the distances between pairs of adjacent discs at said intermediate stations by simultaneously deforming said bridges, [A process according to Claim 12, wherein] each of said bridges [has] having sides, and further comprising the step of forming said sides of said bridges at an angle relative to said center line [with an angular shape].

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17. (Twice Amended) A [Apparatus comprising a] progressive die including a series of die stations, said stations including cutting means and die pilot means, the distances between said die pilot means of successive stations being substantially constant, and a strip of material shaped by said die, said strip having a longitudinal center line, said strip including a series of sections and said sections having strip pilot means adapted to mate with said die pilot means, the distances between said strip pilot means at times being variable and at times different from said distances between said die pilot means, and deformable bridge means connecting adjacent sections of said strip, said sections being relatively stiff and said deformable bridge means being sized to deform and thereby adjust said distances between said strip pilot means in order to compensate for said variable distances between said strip pilot means, said bridge means having portions which are at an angle with said center line to facilitate said deformation.

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18. (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 3 [any of Claims 1 to 4], and further including a plurality of straddle pilots adjacent [at] said slot cutting [initial station] means for engaging the sides of a disc and properly positioning said disc while forming said slot [at said initial station].

B6
19. (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 3 [1], wherein [said strip has a longitudinal center line, and] said slot cutting means forms at least [three] ~~four~~ of said bridges, said bridges being spaced apart on opposite sides of said center line.

21. (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 20, wherein said bridges have [an angled] a chevron shape.

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22. (Amended) A progressive die including a series of die stations, said stations including cutting means and die pilot means, the distances between said die pilot means of successive stations being substantially constant, and a strip of material shaped by said die, said strip including a series of sections and said sections having strip pilot means adapted to mate with said die pilot means, the distances between said strip pilot means at times being variable and at times different from said distances between said die pilot means, and deformable bridge means connecting adjacent sections of said strip, said die including a slot cutting means for forming said bridge means, said sections being relatively stiff and said deformable bridge means being sized to deform and thereby adjust said distances between said strip pilot means in order to compensate for said variable distances between said strip pilot means. [Apparatus according to Claim 17, wherein] said sections having [have] outer sides, and said die further including [said die pilot means includes] straddle pilots which are engageable with said outer sides of at least one of said sections adjacent said slot cutting means for accurately locating said one of said sections.

23. (Amended) Apparatus according to [either of Claims 17 or] Claim 22, wherein said bridge means has a chevron shape.

B8
44. (Amended) Apparatus comprising a series of adjacent discs in a strip of metal, slot means between said adjacent discs, said slot means forming at least two spaced apart narrow deformable bridges which connect said adjacent discs, [each] the average length of at least a plurality of said bridges [having a length which is] being greater than the average width of said slot means.

45. (Amended) A process for progressively cutting a series of adjacent discs from a strip of metal, comprising [cutting a plurality of pilot guide hole means in each disc and] cutting slot means between said adjacent discs, said slot means forming at least two spaced apart narrow deformable bridges which connect said adjacent discs, said bridges and said slot means being cut such that the average length of at least a plurality of said bridges [each bridge] has a greater length than the average width of said slot means.

46. (Amended) A die for progressively cutting a series of adjacent discs from a strip of metal, said die comprising punch means for cutting slot means between said adjacent discs, said slot means forming at least two spaced apart narrow deformable bridges which connect said adjacent discs, the average length of at least a plurality [each] of said bridges being [having a] greater [length] than the average width of said slot means.

Please add the following new claims:

47. Apparatus for shaping a series of discs in a metal strip, each pair of adjacent discs in the strip being connected, and the centers between adjacent discs being separated by center-to-center distances, said apparatus comprising a progressive die having a succession of adjacent stations, said adjacent stations having center-to-center distances which are fixed, and means for maintaining accurate progression of said discs through said stations despite variations in said center-to-center distances of said adjacent discs, said means comprising slot punches for cutting a plurality of slots which form a plurality of narrow bridges connecting said adjacent discs, said bridges being sufficiently narrow to be deformable to correct for said variations, and pilot means at a station adjacent said slot punches for engaging and accurately locating a disc while said slot punches are cutting said slots.

48. Apparatus as set forth in Claim 47, wherein said pilot means comprises straddle pilots engageable with said discs.